

*Betty McCollum delivered the following statement supporting H. Res. 1389, Rule for consideration of the Conference Report for H.R. 4137, The Higher Education Opportunity Act*

Madam Speaker, I rise to support this rule and the conference report for the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

I had the honor to serve on the Education and Workforce Committee for my first 6 years in Congress. It is a real pleasure to know that we will finally be able to reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

I commend Chairman Miller and Ranking Member McKeon on this bipartisan bill.

This bill increases need based aid and provides more access to information on the cost of college. It restores sunshine to student loan programs, and simplifies the financial aid application process. And, it makes new investments to encourage science and technology careers.

This bill focuses on students – who are the future of this country and the key to our global competitiveness.

I am particularly pleased that this conference report includes a provision I worked on with Mr. Tierney to hold states accountable for their investment in higher education.

I also want to thank Chairman Miller and Congressman Bishop for including a definition of diploma mills, for requiring the Secretary of Education to provide information about these fraudulent businesses to students, families and employers, and encouraging more federal effort to prevent and prosecute diploma mills.

Diploma mills sell worthless degrees. They threaten the reputation of American colleges and universities by blatantly using similar name and they cheat employers – including school districts as we saw a few years ago – and the federal government.

Phony medical degrees from diploma mills can and have caused serious harm and even death. More and more it is a national security issue. These fraudulent degrees could be used to obtain visas.

And our failure to shut down diploma mills has been noted in other countries -- harming our reputation around the world.

The increasing number of diploma mills has created serious problems. This legislation includes a first step in addressing this problem.

I urge all my colleagues to support this conference report and to continue to make access to higher education a priority for this Congress.